THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) No Industrial Licence application for the State of Himachal Pradesh is pending for approval of the Central Government as on 1/4/2000.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

Expansion of Trade in Service in the Accontancy Sector

2461. SHRI. GHULAM NABI AZAD : Will the Minister for COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) Whether any decision has been taken to expand trade in service in the accountancy sector between India and Italy; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) The Joint Consultative Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and the Consiglio Nazionale Dei Dottori Commercialisti (CNDC) and the Consiglio Nazionale Dei Ragioneri (CNR) of Italy at its meeting held in New Delhi during March 3-4-2000 has , interalia, decided to put in-place a mechanism by which the services of the small and medium sized accountancy firms of both the countries will be available to the advantage of those who require their professional services in participating in the expanding trade between India and Italy.

Patenting of Indian herbs

2462. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) Whether Ayurvedic Doctors in the country appealed to the United States President, during his recent visit to Delhi, to ensure that traditional Indian herbs such as Neem and Turmeric were not patented in the U.S. since these have been in use in India for centuries; and

(b) If so, whether Government would like to impress upon the concerned authorities that above mentioned simple herbs, described in ancient-medical tests as classical ayurveda formulations for treatment of common challenging illness of today, should not be patented ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) and (b) Ayurvedic doctors are reported to have appealed to the President of the United States of America against the patenting of traditional Indian herbs such as, neem, turmeric etc.

Patents are granted under the sovereign prerogative of countries according to their respective Patent Laws and have territorial effect, that is, they are effective only in the country of grant. Any applicant (individual or company) is free to seek a patent in any country to protect and pursue its interests. However, as and when information is received about patents being obtained on certain items which are not considered patentable and which affect Indian interests, steps are taken to assess whether the grant of such patent can be challenged under the patent laws of the country concerned.

In order to protect bio-resources, the Patents (Second Amendment) Bill, 1999, contains provisions for mandatory disclosure of source and geographical origin of the biological material used in the invention while applying for patents in India. Provisions have also been incorporated to include the non-disclosure or wrongful disclosure of the same as grounds for opposition and for revocation of the patent, if granted. Provisions in this regard are contained in clauses 8, 17 and 28 of the said Bill.

In order to protect traditional knowledge from being patented, provisions have been incorporated in the Patents (Second Amendment) Bill, 1999, to include anticipation by available local knowledge, including oral knowledge, as one of the grounds for opposition as also for revocation of patent. Provisions in this regard are contained in clauses 17 and 28 of the said Bill.

Apart from this, Government has also initiated an exercise to develop a digital data base of traditional knowledge in the field of medicinal plants to avoid patenting of such knowledge.

Expansion of Indo-US Trade

2463. SHRI ANANTA SETHI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have prepared an action plan for the expansion of Indo-US trade;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the terms and reference of the action plan; and

(d) the various steps taken for boosting Indo-U.S. trade?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (d). The Government of India has a plan for promotion of Indo-US trade. The Plan outlines the strategy for promoting India's exports to USA in general, and identifies products with good exports potential.